DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 601 TM 850 078

AUTHOR Chase, Clinton I.
TITLE Assessing Parent Opinions About Education.
PUB DATE [83]
NOTE 8p.; Appended material is in small print.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; National Surveys; *Parent Attitudes; *Public Schools; School Attitudes; *School Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

Recent national reports on the quality of education are open to criticism because of their lack of broad-based, hard data. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop some clear data referents for the debate on the quality of school systems across the nation. Its focus was on a national sample of parents of school children, and the objective was to elicit their feelings and beliefs concerning a number of aspects of their children's schools. Over 5,000 parents from 22 states responded to the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) Parent Opinion Inventory. Respondents came from a wide variety of towns and cities; however, large metropolitan areas were probably underrepresented. The results indicated that parents: (1) tend to be more pleased than displeased with their schools; (2) were most pleased with the general psychological climate of their schools, next best pleased by program, and next by student activities; and were least happy with "school problems" (how well children are being taught to cope in a complex world) and parent involvement in schools. Two statistical tables are appended. (BW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
C. I Chase
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ASSESSING PARENT OPINIONS ABOUT EDUCATION

Clinton I. Chase
Indiana University-Bloomington

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED252601

The recent publication of a "Nation at Risk" (1983) suggests that the educational establishment is crumbling. This report is, however, open to criticism because of its lack of broad based, hard data. This criticism is also true of other reports that appear in the popular press. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to develop some data that may well reflect the quality of school systems across the nation, data that can be used as the basis for pervasive generalizations.

Objectives

The focus of this study was on a national sample of parents of school children. The objective was to elicit from this national sample their feelings and beliefs concerning a number of aspects of the operation of their children's schools. These data can provide a foundation for the debate on school quality and can elevate the debate above one based on limited impressions by the discussants to one that has clear data referents. Although public education is discussed in all walks of life, the discussions are typically based on no data, fragmentary data, or on bits of local data. The debate needs substantial data that reflect the total complex of education. The debate is national and calls for data from a national sample. Therefore, this study surveyed parents of school children across the nation in an effort to provide foundational data concerning the public view of education.

TM 860 078

BEST COPY

Method

The survey utilized the NSSE Parent Opinion Inventory. This inventory has 53 items sorted into subscales that tap eight areas of school operations - parent involvement, objectives, school problems, program, activities, support services, auxilliary services, climate. General items are modified Likert-type.

Each of the 53 items in the Parent Opinion Inventory has a five option, Likert-type format where parents express varying amounts of agreement with (or approval of) a statement. The items are scored on a 1-to-5 point scale, with 3 representing a neutral position. The Inventory is tied primarily to logical validity as laid out by a committee of school specialists, and internal consistency of items within scales. Its total scale reliability is above .90, subscale reliabilities (alphas) average near .70, with half of them ranging above .75, a satisfactory figure for short scales. The correlation of individual items with their subscale totals are consistently higher than with the total score. Item-subscale total correlations were above .60 for 36 of the 53 items. These data indicate a homogeneity of items in a subscale, but tie of items to a more heterogeneous total score. These statistical features provide confidence in the quality of the scales.

The survey included 5,085 answer sheets from parents in 22 states. Respondents came from a wide variety of towns and cities; however, large metropolitan areas were probably underrepresented. The sheets were machine scored and summarized by item and by subscale. Attitudes and opinions of parents were gleaned from both item responses and from subscale scores.

BEST COPY

Results

The subscale means and other descriptive data, are reported in Table 1. Since the subscales have different numbers of items, the best comparison is based on the item mean, a figure that reflects an average agreement across all items in a subscale. For example, if an item mean for a subscale were 3.0 it would suggest that parents typically had a neutral feeling (on a 1-to-5 point scale) about the subscale topic.

The item means show that parents:

1. tend to be more pleased than displeased with their schools (average item score was 3.27 on a 1-to-5 scale).

2. were most pleased with the general psychological climate of their schools (3.48), followed by program (3.40), and student activities (3.31).

3. least happy with "school problems" (2.92) - a scale that deals with how well children are being taught to cope in a complex world, including academic skills, moral-ethical responsibilities, cultural diversity, etc. Parent involvement in schools was next most displeasing (2.98).

When the items were viewed separately (Table 2) some additional data came to light; however, item data must be regarded cautiously since they are less reliable than subscale data. The items suggest that parents:

1. were most pleased, in single item data, with the range of physical education activities (3.76), reasonableness of school rules and regulations (3.75), and with relevance of student activities (3.70).

2. were most displeased, in single item data, with amount of cheating in school (2.55), theft (2.57), and use of drugs (2.68), and displeased with the amount of community involvement (2.89) and the extent to which school decisions reflect parental opinions (2.98).

3. felt the "total education program is of high quality" (3.42), that children have a chance to realize their potential (3.28), but disagreed that they do not need more imaginative education programs (2.72), believed that basic skills are taught well (3.62), and that discipline was not a problem (3.04).

BEST COPY

4. not all are pleased with educational programs in spite of the general lean in the positive direction as shown by overall means. At least one in five "strongly disagreed" that the community was active in school program planning, that there was no drug problem, that there was no theft problem, that no imaginative programs were needed (in spite of the total mean for these items), and that their child enjoyed school lunches.

5. in general appear to show much concern for student behavioral issues, less concern for programmatic considerations. To this end parents appear to believe the instructional side of their schools is running well enough, although they want more responsiveness to the community. Their principal concerns focus on moral problems that reflect concerns of the larger society.

BEST COPY

TABLE 1.

STATISTICS FOR EACH SUBSCALE AND THE TOTAL

	PARENT INVOLVE	EDUC"L OBJECTIVES	IN-SCHOOL PROBLEMS	PROGRAM FACTORS	STUDENT ACTIVITIES	SUPPORT SERVICES	AUXILIARY SERVICES	GEN. PSYCH CLIMATE	RESIDUAL ITEMS	TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N OF ITEMS	3.0000	11.0000	8.0000	7.0000	4.0000	3.0000	4.0000	7.0000	6.0000	53.0000
MEANS	8.9335	35.3371	23.3404	23.8142	13.5347	9.9231	13.3030	24.3284	19.6486	173.1630
STAND DEV	2.7138	7.6684	5.9952	5.4078	3.0800	2.3628	2.9419	5.0947	3.9944	27.9867
RELIAB	.5398	.8188	.7738	.7855	.6098	.3607	.4848	.7411	.5614	.9225
ITEM MEAN	2.9778	3.3134	2.9176	3.4020	3.3837	3.3077	3.3258	3.4755	3.2743	3.2672

LEGEND:

ITEM = THE NUMBER OF ITEMS IN A SUBSCALE
MEANS = ARITHMETIC AVERAGE OF RESPONSES
ITEM MEAN = AVERAGE ITEM MEAN IN SUBSCALE
STAND DEV = STANDARD DEVIATION FOR THE SUBSCALE
RELIAB = INTERNAL CONSISTENCY (ALPHA) RELIABILITY FOR THE SCALE

BEST COPY

TABLE 2

PARENT OPINION SURVEY

CHOICE DISTRIBUTIONS (PERCENTAGES).

ITEM	(GIST OF STATEMENT)	A	B	C	D	E	BLANK
1	STUDENTS ARE RESPECTFUL OF EACH OTHER	3	51	4	14	16	1
2	STUDENTS-TEACHERS WORK-RELATIONS GOOD	7	72	2	9	8	1
3	CHILDRENS PROGRESS REPORTS ADEQUATE	13	52	2	8	13	1
4	PARENTS ADVISED OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES	12	58	2	11	16	1
5	SCHOOL DECISIONS REFLECT PARENT-CONCERNS	5	45	7	25	16	1
6	COMMUNITY ACTIVE IN SCHOOL OPERATION	6	42	6	24	21	1
7	WANT MORE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL AFFAIRS	8	45	5	30	10	2
8	CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO COPE WITH CHANGE	6	54	5	19	15	1
9	CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT TO BE GOOD CITIZENS	9	60	3	14	13	1
10	CHILDREN UNDERSTANDING WORLD PROBLEMS	7	58	3	20	11	1
11	BASIC SKILLS ARE WELL TAUGHT BY SCHOOL	17	58	4	8	12	1
12	MORAL-ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES NURTURED	6	47	6	22	17	1
13	CHILDREN LEARN TO GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE	6	56	4	20	12	2
14	S E OFFERS WIDE VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES	22	57	4	4	8	1
15	MENTAL-PHYSICAL HEALTH BOTH TAUGHT	4	43	8	30	10	2
16	CULTURAL DIVERSITY TAUGHT WELL	4	40	8	32	14	2
17	TEACHING HISTORY RECEIVE RIGHT EMPHASIS	6	57	5	22	9	2
18	CURRICULUM PREPARES STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE	15	57	4	14	8	2
19	DISCIPLINE IS NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM	11	39	12	18	19	2
20	USE OF DRUGS IS NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM	5	29	15	25	24	1
21	THEFT IS NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM	3	30	13	27	26	1
22	CHEATING IS NOT A PROBLEM IN OUR SCHOOL	2	26	13	39	18	1
23	VANDALISM IS NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM	4	41	11	25	18	1
24	OUTSIDERS POSE NO THREAT TO STUDENTS	8	53	8	22	8	2
25	STUDENT ABSENTEEISM IS NOT A PROBLEM	4	36	12	33	13	2
26	TEACHERS DO NOT FEAR BODILY HARM	14	52	7	20	5	1
27	SCHOOLS TOTAL EDUC PROGRAM HIGH QUALITY	13	55	4	15	12	2
28	CHILDREN REALIZING FULL POTENTIAL	11	52	4	15	15	2
29	TEACHERS ARE GENERALLY HIGHLY COMPETENT	9	59	4	17	10	1
30	EMPHASIS ON CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMP	6	50	6	23	13	2
31	MARKS/GRADES RECEIVE PROPER EMPHASIS	7	53	4	14	10	2
32	TOTAL NUMBER AND TYPE OF COURSES ADEQUAT	9	64	3	12	10	1
33	CLASS PERIOD LENGTH SUITS ALL COURSES	10	68	3	13	4	2
34	EXTENT OF EDUC CHANGE/INNOVATION CORRECT	3	54	7	26	9	2
35	NEED MORE IMAGINATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS	7	31	9	30	22	2
36	ACTIVITIES PROGRAM MEETS STUDENTS NEEDS	9	62	3	13	10	2
37	EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT O K	4	56	4	23	11	2
38	STUDENTS HELP PLAN STUDENT ACTIVITIES	5	51	6	26	9	2
39	STUDENTS IN ACTIVITIES IMPORTANT TO ED	18	59	3	13	6	2
40	COUNSELING/GUIDANCE SERVICES COMPETENT	10	45	9	21	14	2
41	SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE ADEQUATE	10	62	4	14	9	1
42	TEACHERS REQ LIBRARY FOR ADDED STUDY	8	52	6	23	10	2
43	MOST STUDENTS TRANSPORTATION NEEDS MET	16	59	6	10	7	2
44	MY CHILD ENJOYS SCHOOL LUNCHES	6	35	15	18	25	1
45	SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM IS NUTRITIONAL	8	49	9	20	11	2
46	OUR SCHOOL IS WELL MAINTAINED	13	64	4	10	8	2
47	MY CHILD LIKES GOING TO SCHOOL EACH DAY	15	55	5	11	12	2
48	STUDENT MORALE IN OUR SCHOOL IS GOOD	7	57	5	18	10	3
49	OUR TEACHERS ARE EASY FOR US TO REACH	16	56	5	15	6	2
50	OUR ADMIN ARE EASY FOR US TO REACH	15	49	7	24	4	1
51	TEACHERS TREAT CHILDREN AS INDIVIDUALS	13	52	5	15	13	2
52	MY CHILD GETS PERSONAL ATTENTION NEEDED	11	52	6	16	14	1
53	SCHOOL RULES/REGULATIONS REASONABLE	15	57	3	7	7	1

BEST COPY